

Year in Review 1980

PRESS RELEASE



The Cleveland Museum of Art

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THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART EXHIBITS 1980 ACQUISITIONS

The annual exhibition of works added to the Museum collection during the previous calendar year--The Year in Review--opens June 24 and closes July 19, 1981. In this brief period of three and a half weeks, all objects acquired in 1980 will for the only time be shown as a group, before they are separated and sent to their respective galleries.

Seeing together the nearly 300 works of art that came to the Museum in 1980 is an opportunity to appraise the quality and range of the Museum's permanent collections. These works add some masterpieces, some rarities, some of great appeal or scholarly importance. All are significant additions to the Museum's present collection of 45,000 objects.

As Director Sherman E. Lee says in his preface to the June Bulletin, which serves as the catalog for The Year in Review exhibition, the 1980 acquisitions also present an unusual opportunity to understand the differences "between the acquisition activities of a dedicated private collector and of a general art museum." In this case, the private collector, the late Noah L. Butkin, who was a Trustee of the Museum until his death in 1980, devoted his energies to acquiring French art of the nineteenth century, especially that produced between 1840 and 1890 by Realist and Academic masters outside the mainstream as defined by scholars and critics until the present day.

Among paintings in the Butkin bequest that Dr. Lee singles out as especially important are a "lost" work by Thomas Couture and "the best work by Jean Georges Vibert known to me." The paintings, sculptures, and drawings in the generous Butkin gift--sixty-seven in all--are shown together in The Year in Review, to convey

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the special character of the collection. It reflects, according to Dr. Lee, "a relatively consistent and conservative approach to the visible world governed by a personal taste for works of an intimate size and with largely figural content." The works in the Butkin bequest enable the Museum to present a broader and more varied view of the art of the nineteenth century than it has yet been able to.

Unlike a private collector, a general art museum is, by its definition of itself and its purposes, dedicated to all art from the distant past to the present. It "has to consider," Dr. Lee explains, "its audience, trustees, staff, and the responsibilities of scholarship." Therefore, its purchases are wide-ranging and varied, drawn from the cultures of nearly all times and places.

To those collections for which the Museum is especially renowned, those of the Middle Ages in Europe and of the Far East, the Museum added works of exceptional power and quality equal to those already on view. A Corpus of Christ from 12th-century Burgundy is a moving and beautiful sculpture, carved from limewood with traces of its original polychromy. A true masterpiece by the most important painter of late Ming China, the ink hanging scroll of The Ch'ing-pien Mountain by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, was first displayed in the special exhibition Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting.

In two other areas of its collection, the Museum has made special efforts to acquire works of the finest quality. Old master paintings--"a diminished breed on the market," Dr. Lee points out--added in 1980 include a Madonna and Child by Neroccio de'Landi, a 17th-century still life painting by the Spaniard Juan van der Hamen, and a small nearly perfect example of the work of Jean Siméon Chardin, whose paintings received in 1979 a definitive exhibition here at the Cleveland Museum.

The earliest of these paintings, the Madonna and Child, is a sensitive evocation of the great Sienese tradition so well represented in the Museum collection.

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The Spanish still life stands as a very early example of the tradition of still-life painting in Spain exemplified by details from the Museum's masterpiece The Holy House of Nazareth by Francisco de Zurbarán. And the Chardin represents a culmination of that still-life tradition in eighteenth-century France.

The other collection to which the Museum has paid special attention in recent years is the modern collection. In 1980 it added not only a classic 1916 work by Juan Gris, The Coffee Mill, but also its first Jackson Pollock, Number 5, 1950, a fine work from the most creative and important period in the career of this seminal Abstract Expressionist painter.

On Wednesday, July 8, and Sunday, July 12, at 1:30 pm, a talk on the exhibition will be presented in the galleries.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact the Public Relations Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.